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Contact: Lindsay VanLaningham

916.324.9670

Jim Marxen

916.869.5056

## **State moves swiftly to ensure hazardous waste is not being dumped at the Western Environmental, Inc. facility**

*State takes action to protect the community and surrounding environment*

**SACRAMENTO, Calif.** – Backing up tough warnings that the Western Environmental, Inc. facility is not permitted to handle hazardous waste, state officials today stopped and inspected trucks outside the WEI facility in Mecca because of significant concerns with the facility's activities.

At 8 a.m. today on a public road, Cal/EPA's Department of Toxic Substances Control and the California Highway Patrol began stopping trucks prior to their entering the WEI facility. Inspectors checked manifests and bills of lading, and took samples of materials in the trucks.

If the manifest stated that wastes are hazardous, drivers were told that the WEI facility is not authorized to accept the waste, and were advised that the shipment must go to an authorized facility. The samples will be analyzed for hazardous waste as part of an ongoing enforcement investigation.

Last month, DTSC informed the facility, the Cabazon Band of Mission Indians, transporters and generators that WEI cannot accept "California-only" hazardous waste. California's standard of hazardous waste is stricter than the federal standard and the standards of other states. The facility is located on Tribal lands and must be permitted to receive California-only hazardous waste according to California law.

"The State takes concerns about the Western Environmental, Inc. facility in Mecca very seriously and is working with several state and federal agencies in a comprehensive approach to address the concerns raised by residents," said Linda Adams, Secretary for Environmental Protection.

"Today's truck stop was part of a coordinated effort to ensure that hazardous waste regulated under California law is not entering or exiting the facility," said Adams. "We meant it when we said we would enforce the law and anyone who continues to doubt our intent to protect the community will face consequences."

Working swiftly to address concerns at the facility, Cal/EPA has formed a task force and is working closely with the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Toxic Substances Control, South Coast Air Quality Management District, Department of Resource Recycling and Recovery, and the State Water Resources Control Board to coordinate efforts to protect the community and the environment around the WEI facility. Its first action was to immediately stop the shipments of hazardous waste to the facility and is working with the Tribe to gain access to the site to further assess the situation and provide a plan of action moving forward. Cal/EPA hopes to meet with them to find solutions that meet the needs of all parties, including those who live near WEI.

"We are committed to working with the community and will identify and implement all appropriate avenues to resolve issues raised by the Mecca community," Adams said.

She added that "the Cal/EPA team is committed to working with the Mecca community every step of the way and will meet regularly with community leaders and community members to hear concerns, discuss solutions and report on progress."

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